

miEnterprise Report



Work In Progress-An Inclusive Research Project

What is this report about?

Work In Progress is an inclusive research project funded by the Big Lottery. Our team is made up of a research co-ordinator, Suzy, a research supporter, Roxanne, and four co-researchers, Jeff, David, Vicky and Kath.

We want to know how supported employment agencies can best help people with learning disabilities into paid work. We are looking at four agencies.

The agencies we are looking at are: Cornwall Works for Learning disabilities; miEnterprise in Herefordshire; Pure Innovations in Stockport and Rose in Essex.

We have talked to people who use these agencies, their families and people who work with them.

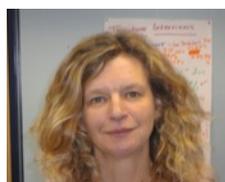
When we have finished interviewing everybody we will write a report about what we have found out. We will tell people about it at meetings and conferences.

We are sending you a short report about what we found out when we visited miEnterprise. If there is anything in the report that you would like to talk to us about please contact us.



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What is miEnterprise?

miEnterprise is an organisation that supports its members to run their own businesses, no matter how small.

They help people in many ways. This can be things like support with money and budgets, renting equipment, and transport.



What did we do?

The Work in Progress Team visited miEnterprise twice in three months.

On the first visit we interviewed five people who are supported by miEnterprise.

On the second visit we spoke to the parents of one participant and someone who works closely with miEnterprise.

We also spoke to three people who work at miEnterprise.

We wanted to know what people thought about miEnterprise and the support they had received.

Before the visit we talked about what worries we might have if we were starting up our own business.

Jeff said he thought it would be difficult for some people to be self employed. They might not understand things about paying tax and national insurance. For example, people might not know that they could get a tax bill.

For businesses to work well they may need to have special equipment like tools. These can be expensive to buy.

Not all new businesses work out. This could be upsetting for people.



We prepared questions for the interviews.



What did we find out?

Jon Pitts started miEnterprise. He told us that miEnterprise will help people with budgets and things like tax and insurance. They will help people to understand benefits too.



People do not need to buy their own equipment at first. They can hire what they need from miEnterprise until they can afford to buy their own.

For example one of the people we interviewed makes her own ice cream using a machine at miEnterprise. Two other people hired tools to help them with a gardening job they were doing.

miEnterprise helps people to do test trading. This means trying a business out for a few weeks to see if it will work.



- **Everybody we spoke to was very happy with the help that miEnterprise gave them.**



- **Some people had tried work before but had not been happy**

Interviewer: 'Why did you stop working at (name of big supermarket)?'

Participant: 'I didn't like it up there. The staff, they wasn't very nice to me'

- **They had sometimes felt under pressure.**

Participant: I did work at (name of supermarket)

Interviewer: Did you enjoy that?

Participant: No, it got quite busy up there



- **Health needs can stop people from working regular hours.**



- **People who would find it hard to get and keep work on the open job market were able to find work that suited them.**

'It's a nice easy step to start working because if you get a job there's a lot to do. You have to be at a certain place at a certain time and you have to do certain things at work.. .what's really good about self employment is you can think about things that are going to work for you and what you're good at.'

(Jon Pitts, miEnterprise manager)

'...there are more opportunities if you are self employed and in a sense that sort of thing fitted both J and D because they would have always struggled with employment. So it almost seemed ready made in a way, for them'

(parent)



- **Some people worried about losing benefits**

Participant: I was nervous (about starting to work for herself)

Interviewer: What were you worried about most

Participant: Benefits...quite a lot of benefits



- **People liked that they got help understanding the benefits system**

‘That’s part of what miEnterprise do, liaise with the tax office, Job Centre Plus. They’ve got all that set’
(parent)



- **Person Centred Planning takes place with people and those close to them to help find out what they want to do. This is done slowly right at the beginning.**

‘If we do the good planning work with people they can do the things that are going to work for them and then build it up bit by bit at a pace.’
(Jon Pitts)

‘I just wish people would look past things and look at the individual person, their strengths and abilities rather than the problems’
(MiEnterprise employee)

‘Not someone saying; ‘well there’s this, this job here and that job there, what do you want to do? It was what he wanted to do, it was absolutely marvellous. Can’t say enough about Person Centred Plans!’
(parent)

Interviewer: How did miEnterprise help?

Participant: By having my meeting

Interviewer: What was the meeting like?

Participant: Very, very good. We were talking about how I'd get on at miEnterprise and I'm doing really, really well.



- **Being able to hire expensive equipment gave people the opportunity to do things they would not otherwise have been able to do.**



'We've got a nice ice cream making machine that's very expensive but we got a grant to buy it. So J can hire that machine so it doesn't cost her much. But if she didn't have miEnterprise she wouldn't be able to use a machine like that' '

(Jon Pitts)

'Yes, we did some thinking about how to get the stuff on the bus. A went with you the first time to see how it would work out. D did some shopping to find the least 'girly' shopping trolley he could. MiEnterprise bought it and D rents it out. (Jon Pitts)



- **People liked the positive encouragement that miEnterprise gave them.**

'They just said, 'come on you can do it. You know, have a go, have a go' (participant)



- **Support was important at work. People had problems with not getting enough support at work before joining miEnterprise.**

'No he didn't have enough support. He was thrown into a job that somebody without any particular difficulties such as D has would have dealt with fairly comfortably but it was hard work for D' (parent)



- **Support can mean lots of different things.**

‘It can be helping with money....I’ve helped people when they have a problem..’

(miEnterprise employee)



- **MiEnterprise give less support over time.** ‘

‘Give them a lot of support and then slowly take a step back and see how it works out and they’re absolutely fine. There is somebody there now who will run the kitchen by herself. When I first started in 2008 she wouldn’t even go in the kitchen and she basically runs it by herself now’

(miEnterprise employee)



- **We know from talking to people in other parts of the country that too much support can make people feel like they can’t do their job.**



- **Parents were happy with the opportunities that miEnterprise gave to their sons and daughters.** ‘

I knew as a mum he’s got more potential than washing up!’

(parent)



- **Delays in getting the funding to be a member of miEnterprise were frustrating.**

‘It’s absolutely awful, she’s desperate to start.’

(Parent)

Why was having their own business important to people?



- **People liked to get paid for the work they did.**

‘It shows the work is valuable and I’m better off as well’
(participant)



- **People liked to work because it gave them something to do.**

‘...it was something to do and I like doing work’
(participant)

‘ was just lounging around the house.....and I thought, time to get off your backside and do something!’
(participant)

‘It’s what he does, he’s got a purpose in life. He goes out every day and he’s got a purpose in life and that means much more than money.’
(parent)



- **People said that working in a job they enjoy makes them feel good about themselves.**

‘I just feel good about work I do’ (participant)



- **Working can mean people gain confidence and skills in other areas of their lives.**

‘(he goes to work) on the bus, two buses. Now his support worker who he has in the house where he lives said; ‘oh no, he won’t do that on his own’. But D said: ‘I can, I can do that’. So he did it!’
(parent)

‘They’ve got more confident and miEnterprise has been a big factor in that’
(parent)



- **People want the same opportunities to work as everyone else.**

‘Everybody just wants to be normal and go to work like everybody else. Their families might go to work, close friends go to work. So all they want to do is go to work and come back at the end of the day and feel they’ve done something. It’s feeling part of a community’ (miEnterprise employee)

‘If you had said to us 3 years ago, ‘Will D ever get work we would have said no’ (parent)



- **People and their families, were happy with the amount of work they did. For some people we spoke to this was as much as 4 days a week, for others it was as little as 5 hours a week. Some people say that a real job must be for more than 16 hours a week. The people we spoke to did not agree with that.**

‘Oh, a real job! No, this is the key; we’ve been looking for the key for a long time for D.’ (parent)



- **People stay motivated because they are doing something they want to do and enjoy.**

‘Actually it’s sometimes holding people back rather than keeping them motivated!’ (Jon Pitts)



What did the team think?

We all liked miEnterprise and enjoyed visiting.

Kath said it was good that they worked with families.

Vicky thought that letting people hire equipment was very helpful.

Jeff was the most worried about people being self employed and was not sure he understood how the money worked. He thought that it cost a lot to be a member. He said some people might not need as much support and they should not have to pay as much.

We talked about how we would feel if we were thinking about setting up our own business.

'It would be a big worry' (Kath)

We think that having support from miEnterprise would make things a lot easier.



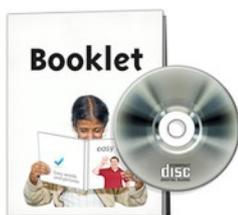
We said the best thing about miEnterprise was that it was all about the person. People get the help they need.

We wondered how people might feel if their business developed so they had to start paying taxes. We think there should be easy information about how you can do this.

People we have spoke to in other parts of the country have thought about self employment but are too worried about it. We think more people should have the chance to join schemes like miEnterprise.



We found out how miEnterprise helps people, but they wonder if many people would be put off starting a business before they talk to miEnterprise.



We think it would be good if miEnterprise could make good information for people with learning difficulties about being self-employed.

They could share this with lots of people like social workers, self-advocacy groups, transition workers and carers groups.

This would help people who haven't heard about miEnterprise, and don't know people who work there already, to get involved.



What happens now?

When the team have finished their research they will write a big report about what helps people with learning difficulties get and keep jobs.

If you have any questions please contact the Work in Progress team.



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